

Postgraduate scholarships provide opportunities for sporting brilliance

AUT University postgraduate students are making a difference to high performance sport and long-term athlete development preparation for the 2012 Olympics, thanks to partner research scholarships with some of New Zealand's top sporting organisations.

This unique approach sees AUT students working hand-in-hand with the country's top athletes and coaches to improve their chances on the world stage.

"Creating a strong and credible link with industry and enabling practice-based research is the foundation of AUT's sporting scholarships," says Professor John Cronin, director of AUT's Institute of Sport and Recreation Research New Zealand (ISRRNZ).

Set up by AUT two and a half years ago and originally co-funded by the Institute, they are now largely funded by industry,

demonstrating the value of this strategy to the country's national sporting organisations.

The sponsorship sees sports scientists paired with sporting organisations for the length of their three-year postgraduate study period.

"The national sport organisations benefit by having a passionate researcher helping them answer performance-related questions," says Cronin. "The relationship also means that New Zealand's sport scientists are advancing their practice, based on applied research."

Cronin says the appeal for students is that they are learning work-related skills, in tandem with the research process, and usually have access to well-trained athletes for their studies.

"Not only are we looking after the student's academic development, but

we have a philosophy that we want the student to be immersed in industry so that he/she can learn multiple skill sets from their postgraduate studies which will assist in future employment."

The range of existing scholarship partners include New Zealand Netball, Bike New Zealand and New Zealand Rugby Union, with more signing up each week.

Cronin cites visits from the Warriors, NZ Rugby League and Auckland Rugby Football Union in the last two months alone.

"Our strong partnership with Millennium Institute of Sport & Health and the New Zealand Academy of Sport North Island in particular has increased our capability in this area and allowed our students to reap the benefits of being part of the country's leading sport research institute and training ground of top athletes," he adds.



AUT postgraduate student, Tom Vandenberghe, takes a closer look at ways to boost the performance of New Zealand's Olympic swim team.

Advances in gambling said to be Janus-faced

Two major meetings focussed on reducing gambling-related health and social costs are being hosted by AUT University this month.

According to Professor Max Abbott, director of AUT's Gambling and Addictions Research Centre, two-thirds of New Zealand adults gamble. Most do so in moderation but a significant minority experiences problems resulting in harm to themselves, others close to them and wider society.

The latest NZ Health Survey found over 50,000 adults had gambling-related problems, with Maori and Pacific Islanders over-represented.

Professor Abbott says both events, an international think tank and conference, will examine the impacts of new technologies on gambling participation and ways to prevent and reduce gambling-related harm.

"New technologies, including the expansion of Internet gambling, have potential to cause enormous personal and social damage. However they are Janus-faced, also offering new ways to prevent problems from arising, detecting problem gamblers early on and assisting with their recovery."

The International Think Tank on Gambling Research, Policy and Practice, hosted by AUT and the Gambling Helpline, takes place on the AUT Marae on 22 and 23 February. The Think Tank brings together leaders in gambling research, policy makers, officials, service providers and the gambling industries. Participation is by invitation and limited to 60.

The Think Tank, in addition to examining new technologies, will receive an update on collaborative research projects arising from previous meetings, consider indigenous and cultural issues in policy, research and treatment, and assess new and emerging trends.

The International Gambling Conference takes place at the Crown Plaza Hotel from 24 - 26 February. It is hosted jointly by AUT, the Problem Gambling Foundation and Hapai Te Hauora Tapui Maori Public Health. Keynote speakers include Sir Mason Durie from New Zealand and Professors David Corn and Robert Williams from Canada. Approximately 300 participants are expected from New Zealand and abroad.

The Festive Season already seems long ago. I hope you got some time for yourself and recharged your batteries. I recently spoke at the Rotary National Science and Technology Forum closing ceremony. The Forum brings together 160 Year 12 students from around the country to sample new developments across a spectrum of sciences. They engage in a rigorous two week programme provided by the three Auckland universities. There is a local focus with teaching sessions at AUT North Shore and Massey Albany, including a field study of Long Bay's fascinating geology and intertidal biology. While Rotary clubs nationwide contribute, Peter Best and the Rotary Club of Milford play a major hands-on role. I also announced the recipients of the AUT Roy Geddes Science Education Award. Roy, a long time Shore resident and past Dean of Science at AUT, was a driving force behind the Forum's success. Sadly he passed away a few years ago. The award, named in Roy's honour, enables recipients to take part in the prestigious London International Science Forum. It was an inspiration to meet and talk with Forum participants. In addition to a passion for science most are active in community organisations and many perform with distinction in sport, the arts and various cultural endeavours. They spoke with enthusiasm for what they learned and plan to do in the future. What a contrast to the portrayal of youth so often seen in the media. This week on campus we are in the midst of enrolment. Applications are greatly up on last year's previous high. Again the Government cap on student places means turning away hundreds of students who meet entry criteria - many in disciplines including health with substantial workforce shortages and current campaigns offshore to recruit staff. Looking out five to ten years workforce needs are projected to greatly increase in many fields. It is time to rethink our priorities. Riding out the recession and preparing for future growth and prosperity requires enhanced investment in youth and others who aspire to a university education and a place in the future knowledge economy.



Max Abbott, Pro Vice-Chancellor, North Shore

Shape the future of our sporting landscape

As our presence on the world sporting stage grows, the skills needed to manage athletes, sport organisations and major sporting events have never been more important. The Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (Management) can give you the knowledge to lead us into this exciting new era.

